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EARLY POEMS

By Humbert Wolfe

Basil Blackwell

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PREFACE.

LIKE ghostly hansom-cabs, delicately ringing round a midnight corner, these first poems of mine slip back into the welter of taxi-cabs, motor-buses, and all the rapid traffic of contemporary violence. Little did I guess as I leaned from the high box and contemplatively flicked at my Pegasus—with his wings neatly concealed by the shafts—that he was doomed from the outset. Because he neither cared for, nor could compete with, the horse-power of Vulcan. Outmoded museum-pieces or perhaps museum-litter they patrol the strange streets, certain, in all the change, of one thing only, that they will never pick up a fare.

And why or how should they? Their pace was not measured by any Transatlantic gauge. They did not know that speed in transit, rather than the goal, was the object of verse. They were content—these “London Sonnets” for example—to be claimed as the gondolas of London. They had no ambition to be mistaken for a cross between a dynamo and a dropped aitch. In a word, they belong to a world before the Garden of Eden had become a motor park.

And therefore, it may be urged, they had better have been left to rot in the cellars of oblivion. Any young man in 1910 could have written “London Sonnets,”

and most had the decency at least not to publish them. Why then admit to their existence? Better to let them quietly return to the elements of which paper and printing-ink are made.

But Mr. Basil Blackwell did not agree, and I do not agree. I do not know Mr. Blackwell's reasons, though I am convinced that they were admirable. But I do know my own, and I propose to state them. In the first place, I do not share the Roman proclivity—fashionable again to-day—for exposing the first-born. These poems cost me as many pains as any I ever wrote, and were as dear to me or dearer. It is arguable (and often argued) that I had better not have published any verse. But if any, then these are as much a part of me as any later and more acceptable arrivals. I am not prepared to collect a volume of "those poems that I cared to retain." I loved these excessively with the ridiculous tenderness of young parents with their first, and perhaps quite worthless, child. But I will never admit their worthlessness, and I will never disown them.

I have a second reason at least as strong. Many young poets are ruined by an early success. No such doom waited on my firstlings. The bread was cast on the waters, but some wandering gull swallowed it, and so farewell. I remember only one review of which one of the five lines asserted that "A faintly religious note quavers through these verses." Damn the thugs! Why should they murder my innocents?

But the third reason is perhaps for me the strongest of all. It divides itself into two parts. First it is possible to maintain that these poems were not as infinitely negligible as the general silence suggested. But—even more vital—if they were negligible, then much—if not all—that I have written since goes with them. For I at least can find in them the seeds of all that I have attempted since. I can't (can I?) therefore without admitting defeat, accept the first verdict.

It is, I agree, most improper to praise or even defend one's own writing. I cannot, however, believe that the author of "London Sonnets" and "Shylock", who by accident bore the same name as mine, is in any real sense the middle-aged writer of this preface. For example, I have a dim memory of a boy aged sixteen writing eagerly in an attic bed-room in Oak Mount at Bradford a poem called "The Well." Little did he know of love or loss or separation when he wrote:

Lifted again is the voice of your singing.

Golden again are the perilous margins.

Sweet are your eyes, and young and immortal

Our hearts are set to the day and the hills.

Moreover, it was not I, but some other, who stumbled down the stairs and read the poem to Consola—that most beautiful red-haired lady, who was his mother. Nor did I see her surreptitiously look up "Tennyson" in a handbook to discover the age at which he committed his first poem.

No! that child, as the shifting young men in Bradford, at Oxford and in Battersea are so strange, that I feel as though I were reading the work not so much of an elder brother as of a young ancestor. Some racial piety must colour my view, but I hope no more. It is in that spirit that I looked at these volumes, and in that spirit that I agreed to re-issue the books when Basil Blackwell not for the first time urged this course upon me.

It is true that they were—even when they were written—out of fashion. They are not Imagist, still less are they aware of typography as the *gradus ad Parnassum*, and I doubt whether they entitle me to the description lavished by a bright young Cambridge spirit, of the “eunuch of Georgia.” They are none of these things, and for that reason they were not in the movement. They contribute nothing to the causes of ethnology, psycho-analysis and mere brilliant nescience. And yet—

And yet I read “Pierrot” in “London Sonnets” again. I am prejudiced no doubt because the poem is the first guess at

*Pierrot with his face of China
Very like the ghost of Heine*

and at “Humoresque.” But even so, I do not find myself wholly unaffected. The fifth verse beginning

*My friend Pierrot it seems that things go ill
With you,*

is indefensible. Nevertheless I can understand why many years later this waif should have been admitted into an Anthology, as into a Barnardo's Home for lost children of the mind. Or looking at "Shylock" I find "Battersea" and "The Little Sleeper" which, as being short, I quote in full:

BATTERSEA.

*I have always known just where the river ends
(Or seems to end) that I shall find my friends,
Who are my friends no longer, being dead,
And hear the ordinary things they said,
That now seem wonderful, some evening when
I take the Number Nineteen bus again
To Battersea. It will, I think, be clear
With stars behind the four great chimneys. Dear
In the moon, young and unchanging, they
Will cry me welcome in the boyish way
They had before they went to France, but I,
A boy no more, will greet them silently.*

THE LITTLE SLEEPER.

*This little sleeper, who was overtaken
By death, as one child overtakes another,
Dreams by his side all night and will not waken
Till the dawn comes in heaven with his mother.*

I can find nothing in either that I should wish to change. Indeed, I should be glad if I could wake to-

morrow and find that I had written them overnight. "France," on the other hand, is a little spoiled by its elaborate conceits, and yet I cannot read wholly without response the verses :

*The corn outlasts the bayonet,
Whose blades no blood nor rust can fret,
Or only the immortal rust
Of poppies failing in their thrust.*

*The line these hold no force can break,
Nor their platoons advancing shake,
Whose wide offensive wave on wave
Doth make a garden of a grave.*

There is, too, in "The Fried Fish-Shop" with its last lines

*Clappin' your stummick with your empty 'ands
And thinking gently of a wooden box
Where they will lay you at the parish charge
Straight if you're small and doubled if you're large*

something that was pleading for the uses of satire long before I had begun to believe in that mode as one of the redemptions of the world.

Nor are there wanting individual lines, which among much that lacks distinction, have a certain liveliness :

*And white, like gods, when through the sculptured portal
The starshine enter and the moon's cold graces.*

*And the lean
Daffodils danced before or ran between.*

*For the great forehead lifted
Out of the shade of life, and light had shifted
Her quality.*

*Death with the powdered stars will walk and pass
Like a man's breath upon a looking-glass,
For a suspended heart-beat making dim
Heaven brighter afterwards because of him.*

*Watching the menial clouds of conquered day
Applaud with vehement reflection
The cold triumphant ending of the sun.*

*And maybe where the dog-rose remedies
With her wild flush the hedge, and spring begins.*

*So large they are and cool the skies ;
God's frozen breath in dreams, or worse ;
Beautiful unsupported lies
That simulate a universe.*

And finally :

*For the ghost, the ghost is dumb
Of love that is past over,
And the merciless laughter of the moon
Pursues the ghostly lover,
Till in the empty street*

*There's an end of the lisp of feet,
And the crowder breaks his fiddle and the tune,
And all the stars are gone
In Babylon.*

I admit that these poems and lines have still some significance for me, and I suppose that must be in part because in substance, if not in form, they are my point of view. Very well then, the point of view may be all the things of which it has been accused—superficial, facile, unstylized, derivative, and a barrel-organ dressed up as a grand piano. But it remains my point of view.

As to the form I could say much. I have learned something of technique in the ten years since they were written, and in the twenty-five years since some of them were written. Indeed, I considered whether I might not perhaps rewrite those in which the 'prentice hand had most obviously failed. I did in fact tinker with the name-poem of the second volume, and it may possibly be of some faint interest to prosodists to look at the changes which I made. The poem begins:

*Jew-baiting still! Two thousand years are run
And still, it seems, good Master Chesterton,
Nothing's abated of the old offence.
Changing its shape, it never changes tense.
Other things were, this only was and is.*

There were three obvious faults in these five lines. "Good Master" is the worst kind of cliché, and "tense,"

used for the sake of rhyme, dictates the clumsy fifth line. I would have re-written them :

*Jew-baiting still! Two thousand years are run,
And still you are implacable, Chesterton.
The old dishonour still brands the aching brow,
And He who died for you is dying now
On the same Cross by the same treacheries.*

I made also many minor alterations such as changing *All all's the same* in line eight to *It is the same*, and *Jesus' side* in the next line but one to *the side of Jesus*—which gives a metrical pause very necessary in a long poem. But I confine myself to the major changes. The lines beginning

*It happened thus. When the last "adonoi"
Had faltered into silence of some boy
Whose voice was all a silver miracle*

have for me the fatal fault of abandoning the natural order of prose with certain consequential clumsiness. I would have re-written them :

*It happened thus. In the fawn eyes of a boy
the light had died on the last "adonoi,"
and the voice, cascading upwards, with the spell
of fountain-water sang "Shemah Israel,"
by a sweeter voice than his repeated, broken
with the sorrowful thrill—*

Finally, near the end of the poem in the lines beginning

All

Closer about their foreheads draw the shawl

the present tense is used, I fear, because of the exigencies of the rhyme. Rhyme must never be permitted to dictate, and I would therefore have changed the lines to read:

*“Thy will be done!” And in the palpable dark
crowding like fog upon the single spark
of the altar-lamp they did not mercy crave,
but with the dry rustle of a retreating wave
to the Mills of God did over shingle call,
“Grind quickly, since ye grind exceeding small.”*

After concluding that experiment in revision I found that I was ploughing the sands. Hopeless to seek to recapture the mood of the author, long since a quiet ghost, and almost impertinent to temper with my hardly acquired experience his first impenitent thrill. Such as they are, therefore, I send them out again — these poems — after all these years crying, like the old Anchises to his hero-son, out of the shades to them returning to the light:

“I decus, I nostrum, melioribus utere fatis.”

HUMBERT WOLFE.

LONDON PSEUDO-SONNETS
AND OTHER VERSE.

TO J.

DEDICATION.

THESE were the first anemones—
God only in his heaven sees
How moving on their small green feet
They blossomed in a London street,
From a cool valley, as I guess,
Beneath a hill in Lyonesse.

THE OLD CLOTHES DEALER.

IT'S not my fault, now is it? I'm a Jew.
I'd a been born a Christian quick enough
If only so I could have sold my stuff
Double the price, and not be called a screw.
There's half-day Saturday at Synagogue,
And when Atonement comes a whole day lost.
O, I don't grumble; still one counts the cost
When on the top I'm treated like a dog.
And, though a Jew should't by rights complain
Bein' the chosen, can't a man have dreams?
Clothes' dealing's not the desert, still it seems
We all of us are wandering again.
I often think when the Shemah begins
"O God o' Jacob! ain't we paid our sins?"

COVES AT HAMPTON COURT.

YOU go by motor-bus from Hammersmith
And come back loud and cheerful after dark
Adorned with twigs you've plucked in Bushey Park,
Eating the sandwiches you started with.
And you don't care, why should you? when you're brought
Into the grimy streets out of the green,
That, if you'd had the luck, you might have been
The sort of cove who lives at Hampton Court.

You've got the murders and the betting news,
And slums to bake in and the picture shows.
Why should you care if somewhere a red rose
• Burns all night through, and the great avenues
Are lit as though with candles. What's the odds?
London's for you; the summer's for the gods.

ONE MAN RETURNS.

HE wanted me to tear me 'ands to bits
Along o' the box-makers, 'stead of which
I took and bought a basket, struck a pitch
To sell me flowers by the Hotel Ritz.
I like 'is cheek. It isn't 'im wot sits
Working in darkness till your fingers itch
And 'arf your side is broken with a stitch—
'Im swanking in 'is blessed epaulittes?
Nor I don't care, not what you might say care
If 'e's gone orf. Not that I'd reely mind
If, 'earing that I'd got a bit to spare,
He come back sudden. I should act refined,
Pin 'im 'is flower in with me 'and quite steady
And then say proud-like, "Why if it ain't Freddy."

THE BUN-SHOP.

O DAMN those marble tables: makes me larf
To think I've finished with them. I believe
If you rubbed hard on each one with your sleeve,
You'd find cut on them some gel's epitaph.
They look like tombstones, don't they? in a row
Quietly waiting in a mason's yard.
Seein' them there cruel and white and hard
One might ha' guessed, I think, how things would go.
But we don't heed no warning, gels like me,
And so I stayed, and now they've got my name
Carved deep, with something written about shame
For the next gel (when her turn comes) to see.
One comfort though, if God damns us who fell
He can't find worse to 'urt us, not in 'Ell.

THE FRIED FISH-SHOP.

THE upper clawses they don't like the smell,
Nor they don't need to. They can pay for food,
But we who sometimes cawn't, it does us good.
Lord, what a life to 'ave fried fish to sell!
Warm all day long and nuthin' much to do
And always a hot bit if you're inclined.
Shut all day Sundays and if you've a mind
Always go out and pitch into a Jew.
But wanting won't mend 'oles up in your socks
Nor cure that 'ungry feeling when you stands
Clappin' your stummick with your empty 'ands
And thinking gently of a wooden box,
Where they will lay you at the parish charge
Straight if you're small and doubled if you're large.

THE STREETS BEHIND THE TOTTENHAM COURT ROAD.

THE quiet folk who live in Kensington
Mothers of pleasant girls and worthy wives
Living at ease their comfortable lives
Don't think what roots their homes are built upon,
Don't think, or wouldn't listen if you shewed
That beyond cure by love or change by hate,
Like hooded lepers at each corner wait,
The streets behind the Tottenham Court Road.
Row upon row the phantom houses stain
The sweetness of the air, and not a day
Dies, but some woman's child turns down that way
Along those streets and is not seen again.
And only God can in his mercy say
Which is more cruel, Kensington or they.

THE YORKSHIRE GREY.

THE Yorkshire Grey like any other pub,
Quietly blazes till the final shout
"Time's-up" sends the companions tumbling out,
Giving their lips a last reluctant rub.
And if you're passing by on any day
You'll hear a woman with a barrel organ,
Sing in a high cracked voice what sounds like "Morgen,
Morgen kommt nie und heute is mir weh,"
And every day whether its rain or shine
She holds an old umbrella with a handle
Of curiously carved silver. Whether scandal
Or tragedy, its no affair of mine.
Why should I care then when some drunken feller
Sends her to blazes, her and her umbrella.

WARDOUR STREET.

THERE'S a small cafe off the Avenue
Where Alphonse, that old sinner, used to fix
A five-course dinner up at one and six,
And trust to luck and youth to pull him through.
I can't remember much about the wine
Except that it was ninepence for the quart
Called claret and was nothing of the sort,
Cheap like the rest and like the rest divine.
But Alphonse, I suppose, is long since sped
And madame's knitting needles rusted through
And even Marguerite, like us she flew
To wait on, waited on by death instead.
Well Alphonse, well Madame, well Marguerite!
They've no more use for us in Wardour Street.

THE SUBURBS.

BECAUSE they are so many and the same,
The little houses row on weary row ;
Because they are so loveless and so lame
It were a bitter thing to tell them so.
And ill to laugh at those who hither came
Not without hope and not without a glow,
And who, perchance, by sorrow struck or shame
Not without tears look back before they go.

Here is no place for laughter nor for blame,
And not for tears, for none shall ever know
What here is done and suffered, nor proclaim
The end to which these myriad spirits grow.
He understands, whose heart remembereth
That here is all the tale of life and death.

THE LAST LONDON SONNET.

ALL roads in London lead the one last way.
Like little streams that find a flowing river
They find the one great road that runs for ever,
Yet has no London name. They know it, they
Who when the lamps in Oxford Street are lighted
And star-strewn Thames through all his bridges moving,
Velvet assumes, see not for all their loving
These things they loved, hear not, as uninvited,
To London revel calling Piccadilly.
They have gone over to the bitter stranger
Light-foot and heavy, hug-the-hearth and ranger
Our streets desert. And under rose and lily
(Even though Kew were unto lilac setting)
Sleeping they pass forgotten and forgetting.

“SOMETIMES WHEN I THINK OF LOVE.”

I.

SOMETIMES when I think of love
I think of Mimi singing in Boheme,
Just as the tune across the footlights came
When we were young, my dear, at Covent Garden !
Poor music, but before the senses harden
Puccini's made for boys and girls to wear
Spite of sham passion and a poitrineaire.
For if they looked and didn't find the key
At least they found the hearts of you and me.
That sort of love age thinks of with a smile
How innocent it was of truth and guile,
How young perhaps and yet how half-divine
And how imperishably yours and mine.
You will not wonder nor will you reprove
My thoughts of Mimi when I think of love.

II.

Sometimes when I think of love
I see a boat upon a river,

And the rushes suddenly shiver,
Because of a perilous foot that treads
The reeds and the flowers into their beds.
Because of a music that shakes and begins
A different music and conscious of sins,
A tune was old at the birth of the river,
A tune is asleep in the blood for ever,
Asleep in the blood and loving and hating
The time and the hour for which it is waiting.
Puccini yields to a sob in the throat
A hand round the heart as note answers note
With the music that wrenches and melts and grips
The hands hot on hands, the lips close on lips
Cruelly volleying clearer and stronger
Till we are a boy and a girl no longer.
And we struggle in vain as long as we can
Hating and loving and welcoming Pan,
And you are a woman and I am a man.
And you will not wonder and cannot reprove
If I hear Pan's pipes when I think of love.

III.

Sometimes when I think of love
I hear a heavy voice repeat
"There's a good doctor up the street."

And either it seems I am hard at hearing
Or stupid perhaps or terribly fearing.
For its late of a winter night and raining
With cry of wind ; or is it something complaining ?
One lamp in the street and a leafless tree
And a thing is moving that frightens me,
With fingers that hover about my nape
A shape like a hand, and yet not a shape.
Now all that we had in the past is over,
Each lover's alone, the love from the lover.
No comforting hand for me in the gloom,
No voice of mine in the darkened room.
Where is the music and where are the songs ?
For love has crept off ashamed of his wrongs.
Poor love has gone off to rail at passion,
And he will not wait for the night to fashion
Out of pain and fear and anguish and danger,
A lover strange with his love a stranger,
And yet, as they were at the opera
Incredibly close and familiar,
Incredibly close as once on the river
When each is a gift and each is a giver.
Incredibly close and all they have hoarded
Of life and of love in this moment rewarded.
Rewarded ! Has love in the darkness heard
Of the little lost shadow, the small lost third ?

Love is returning—to find them alone,
And if love be a sinner, who casts a stone?
Shattered and beaten and blindingly sure
Of love and themselves and strong to endure
He finds them, by pain more lastingly crowned
Than ever by joy and by laughter were bound
Happier lovers and lovers untaunted
By the shameful cries these lovers have haunted.
If this be their love, who out of the pit
Being a devil challenges it?
In heaven assayed, in hell-fire priced
Who casts the first stone? Not I, says Christ.
You will not wonder nor will you reprove
If I think of this, when I think of love.

IV.

Sometimes when I think of love
I remember how you stooped down from heaven,
Because they had told you I was unforgiven,
To take half of the storm, and share the stripe
An angel in hell with her guttersnipe.
I am thinking then of your lighted face
And your hands and the way your fingers lace
As you sit quietly reading a book.
Perhaps I move and you suddenly look

Across the room, and the soul in your eyes
Is bright as it looks with the old surprise,
Changing for ever, for ever the same,
And you break my heart as you speak my name.
You must not wonder, you will not reprove
If sometimes I dare not think of love.

OLD.

SO old, so changed, and odd
Even as God,
I am, so odd and old,
That I am bitter cold
In heart and limb
Like him.

I might in heaven be,
Even as He.
So lonely and so rare
Beyond the utmost prayer
My spirit weighs,
Dead days.

Or I might work in hell
His miracle,
Changing from joy to tears,
To quiet all the years,
With icy rod,
Like God.

I might immortal be
Even as He,
Saying, as heaven saith,
What Victory, Oh death,
What sting can save,
Oh grave?

As I, alone and dumb,
What doth not come
Ever, He waits to see
And surely, waiting, he
Must pray ah pray! to die
Even as I.

THE SONG OF THE GAMBUCINOS.

THE little houses in the street,
And the warm blinds at night.
Outside the copper on his beat
And the moon so white, so white.

They know what we shall never know,
See what we cannot see,
The steady lamplit ways that go
To the quiet cemetery.

They have not any fear at all
Of life and of its end.
They hear church bells, their children call,
Their wife and death their friend.

But for us the moon is white, so white
It drowns us and it stings,
And we must fly throughout the night
Because of dangerous things.

FEBRUARY 14.

LET'S be done with talking !
Words are half a snare,
That fools use for stalking
What was never there.

Let's be done with weeping !
Tears are but a sign
That a doom is creeping
On what was divine.

Why be broken-hearted ?
Time to break the heart,
If we should be parted
And not care we part.

Dear, the wind is over
In the world outside.
I was once your lover,
You were once my bride.

Let's go out together.
In the quiet air
We may find each other
Waiting as we were.

PIERROT.

MY friend Pierrot your sleeves are far too long.
Look! I can hardly find at all your hands.
And all your cotton tunic is cut wrong,
And what your eyes mean no one understands.

Ah yes, Pierrette, my sleeves are far too long.
Ah yes, Pierrette, you cannot find my hands,
But better so than Pierrot did you wrong
By telling you what no one understands.

My friend Pierrot you fear to take the light,
Look! I can hardly see at all your face.
And what I see, Pierrot, is very white.
Are you afraid? Ashamed? or in disgrace?

Ah yes, Pierrette, I dare not take the light.
Ah yes, Pierrette, you cannot see my face.
My candle died with love, and in the night
Oh! Harlequin, Pierrette, is my disgrace.

My friend Pierrot it seems that things go ill

With you. Look! I can hardly hear your word.

And the dark shadow round grows darker still,

And a new voice which is not yours is heard.

Ah yes, Pierrette, it seems that things go ill.

Ah yes, Pierrette, you cannot hear my word.

And the dark shadow which grows darker still

Is death, Pierrette, of which you have not heard.

THE DEAD MAN IN THE POOL.

ONLY a glance it was,
Only a word!
What a romance it was
All but absurd!

All but absurd, you see,
Yes but not quite.
There's one more word you see
"Death" we must write!

She had the knack of it
—Less than a kiss,
And for the lack of it
Look he is this.

O what a king he was
(Drowned in a pool),
What a brave thing he was,
O what a fool!

While all the rest of us
Struggle to fame,
Here is the best of us
Dead with his shame.

Shame? Oh I wonder now.
What do you say?
If you should blunder now
Choose me your way!

If you'd thrown hope away;
Well would you care
Through life to grope a way?
Or would you dare

Take up the lot of it
Life, love and fame,
Make a clean shot of it
Into the flame?

Ah it was brave of him
Let them cry "shame."
Life made no slave of him;
But you'll exclaim,

Was she worth trying for?
He thought her so.
Was she worth dying for?
Yes, and then no.

"No," for a wiser man.
"No," for a less.
But the heart cries "Amen,"
When he says "yes."

There in the pool he was
Just a dead thing.
O what a fool he was.
O what a king!

DEAD LOVER.

TELL me, dead lover, you who broke my heart
(O dead indeed, since love himself is dead).
Need I remember that we came to part,
May I forget to whom and why you fled?

Tell me, dead lover, since the grave is strong,
And those who sleep are cured of joy and pain,
And now no love may reach you, do I wrong
If I begin to love you all again?

And see, dead lover, since the shadows fall,
And nothing now is false and nothing true.
Might I not dream (you would not know at all)
That I, O love, was loved once more by you.

And since, dead lover, death defeats your pride,
And ere it dreamed of pride my love awoke,
O let me think, it was because you died,
And not because you left me, my heart broke.

THE GODS OF THE COPY-BOOK HEADINGS.

A REPLY.

FENRIS the wolf, and Jörmungand the snake
In the slime and the swamp remorseless wait.
For not the years nor human hopes can break
Valhalla's sentence thus pronounced by Fate :

“These gods that are the children of men's dreams—
Virtue and honour, courage and the songs
Men sing about their hearthstones—stolen gleams
In the poor heart unbroken by its wrongs,

“These gods, of man's refusal of the beast
The half pathetic, wholly fleeting sign
Who in that tenderness are gods the least
Where human weakness finds them most divine,

“These pitiful gods, fabric of mankind's tears
A dream of what all human hearts have wanted
The vision at the end of all the years
The holy ghost that half the world has haunted,

"These gods are mortal as the heart that shaped them
And in that hour when mankind's heart must break
These gods who only by that heart escaped them
Fall to the wolf and Jörmungand the snake."

Fate pauses, but from Hela's halls is heard
A voice is young when all the gods are dead.
Balder the beautiful has one more word
The word that even Fate must leave unsaid.

"True they depart the half-gods, and the snake
And Fenris come. But in the heart's defection
I, Balder, bound in Hell for that heart's sake
I am the life and I the resurrection.

"I, love, being loosed, will take my harp up—so—
Singing what all the world at last will learn
'The devils come because the half-gods go
But in the end the gods, the gods return.'"

WHEELS 1919

WHY do you write about Frascati's
You who from the balcony leaning
'Neath the lure that was Astarte's
Find a negroid devil grinning.

Changed indeed and almost stupid
Yielding to analysis
Now a Piccadilly cupid
Hanging on a painted kiss.

Now a toy in two dimensions
Operated by a string
In your hand, whose interventions
Set the object capering.

You who at the higher level
Know love as he truly is
Not the fair Assyrian devil,
Not the poor idolatries

Of the savage, not the crazes
Say of Shelley, and his set :
But you find him (as your phrase is)
Palm to palm in quiet sweat.

That's a way, O brother brother
A new way for verse to move,
There's an older and another
Will you listen ? way of love.

I from that same terrace waiting
For the music to begin,
"Amoureuse" anticipating,
Watched a boy who blundered in.

Slim he was, a little stooping
At the shoulders as it seemed,
Eyes on which the lids were drooping
Seeing only what he dreamed.

Where he came was noise and clatter,
But the pandemonium
Either didn't seem to matter
Where he stood, or else grew dumb.

And the waltz the band was creaking,
Like a cluster, round his head
Changed to cry "What's music seeking
Save what he has left unsaid."

And like flowers, bourgeois faces
Overtaken by the tune,
Pilfered unimagined graces
From an unimagined June.

And, when once again the Babel
Rose, though we had never stirred,
There between us at the table
At Frascati's was the third.

What's the good of all this antic
You'll impatiently exclaim,
Still incurably romantic
Still incurably the same.

Only this—that at Frascati's
If one does not wipe one's hands
That old magic was Astarte's
Goes, before one understands.

THE WELL.

AT full afternoon slowly the branches
Stirred as of old and fragrant with flowers,
Touched with a breath of wind, look down and wonder
To where—far below—is the delicate water.

Here should be peace as was peace and splendour
Of hearts' first stirrings, the eye to the hills
Turned, the call of the perilous margins,
Life just beginning, but life well begun.
Here by the well we played (you remember)
(Then too the grasses grew at the edges
Tempting small hands but tempt now no longer)
Here by the well we dreamed after playing.

Havest you forgotten (or has death no mercy)
How bright the days were, and how the evening
Softer than sleep laid her mysterious
Hands on the garden soothing and changing.
Here at the well side we loved after dreaming,
Since we had played by it, since we had dreamed.
Here at the well side love that was awakened
Sank like a stone, but leaving no ripple.

Here are our shapes that play, dream, love, quarrel,
Here are our dreams (and if there were dreamers,
If we were not like our visions a dream)
All is not over—is all then over?

Here is the well, and the delicate water
Far below gleaming, the starred white branches
Fragrant with flowers, Here is the noontide,
Even the grasses grow at the edges.
What then is gone? If we were the dreamers
(And not a dream) then all must be over.
I an old man cold, fruitless and lonely,
Watch by the water, which you cannot see.

But if we two are dreams of a dreamer,
All is not over, and here together
Age falls from me, and from you the mantle
Death seemed to cast, and here by the well side
Lifted again is the voice of your singing,
Golden again are the perilous margins,
Sweet are your eyes, and young and immortal
Our hearts are set to the day and the hills.

JUDAS.

NOT I, oh Christ, not I betrayed thee,
But He was traitor, He who made thee
Born of a village carpenter
With such immortal longings stir
As stretched beyond the world and found
In God himself the final wound.
Through me thou wast by soldiers taken,
By Him, by Him on the Cross forsaken.

THE NIGHT.

BE quiet bird !
Be silent all
That e'er were heard
And cease to call.

Drop perfume rose !
And flowers white
Put off your shows.
For see 'tis night.

Soft creatures slow
Begin to pass,
And thousands grow
From out the grass.

With deep low whirr
The air is full,
And through the fir
The moon shines cool.

There is no pain,
Sorrow is dead,
Slow Charles' wain
Wheels overhead.

There is no grief,
All things have ease,
No bough or leaf
Stirs on the trees.

THREE SONNETS OF LOVE.

I.

AT NOONTIDE SEEKING.

CAN love being love and therefore magical,
When summer and the roses lie between,
Find back to spring? Or shall he know at all
The places where his golden feet have been
At noontide seeking. Shall he know again
The tune of dawn, the unconditioned sky,
The world before the coming of the rain,
That like a shadow waited and went by,
Soft like a God and like a God aflame?
Ah will he find that murmur at your lips,
Still see you standing, as the morning stands,
With fingers stretched that touched and fled and came
To mine again, warm to the tender tips
Once lilies and now roses—Oh your hands?

II.

AN ACCUSATION.

WHAT have you given, love, to those who gave
All for your sake? What gift to weigh the worth
Of those who, having all, did nothing save,
But for a kiss made jetsam of the earth?
What answer have you for the thronging ghosts—
Gentlemen of high heart, who were not brave
Because of you? What for the stricken hosts
Of those who, seeking truth, embraced the grave
Your magic sets about the brain? What way
Of answer have you for the fallen tears
Of those who heard you calling, and, once strong
As being pure, became the body's prey?
What answer, O sweet God, to all the years
That worshipped you, and crowned you, and were wrong?

III.

THE TREMBLING BRIM.

LOVE, if remorseless, needeth no defence,
(You say) for though he waste our lives it seems
A moment spent with love is recompense,
For all the might have beens of all our dreams.
Yet is their something in the might have been
Was never yet in love. O trembling brim
Of the far country, that our eyes have seen,
Have seen and turned from for the sake of him.
Are there no pleasant places, no strange deeds
Waiting the comer? Is there no great sea
Watched by immaculate angels who attend
Our sails that linger? No red star that leads
To where, beyond all passion, shaken free
We follow the great road that has no end?

THE REPLY.

ALL things are true of love, save these things only,
That at the long day's end when love is over,
He's of love cheated who was once a lover,
And she, by love once visited, left lonely.
The dream is done, but here's no cause for sorrow
When beauty's seal is on the dream descending.
Beauty is mortal, beauty has an ending,
Beauty and love alone need no to-morrow.
All other things—courage and truth and virtue—
Have the one doom, the lust for the immortal.
Love only, with lost beauty, life outpaces,
Cold, though they burn, untroubled, though they hurt you,
And white, like gods, when through the sculptured portal
The starshine enter and the moon's cold graces.

GOD GAVE US BODIES . . .

GOD gave us bodies for suffering, and for strangers
To have their will of. We, divided, waken
To find the heart that won through all its dangers
By the stained body at the dawn forsaken.
We said of love "The body, and its langours
Are but a little thing, though sweet. Unshaken
Behold the heart!" Fools! Who forgot the angers
Of blood despised and the heart overtaken
By the gross hands of lust even at the portal
Of bliss. And not for any tears is altered
Love thus betrayed, yet though betrayed, immortal,
Struggling for ever and for ever haltered.
God gave us bodies; let them write in heaven
"Love we forgive, but God is not forgiven."

RONSARD AND HELENE.

YOU sang, Ronsard, in your imperial lay
Hélène, and sang as only you would dare
That she would cry, in reading, old and grey !
“Ronsard sang this of me when I was fair.”
That was youth spoke, Ronsard, who will not stay
To wonder if his own divine despair
May not with losing loveliness outweigh
Kisses, that given, melt upon the air.
If youth but knew, Ronsard ! The things that seem
Would he not barter for the things that are,
And leave his mistress to embrace her dream
Exchange her lips for her lost beauty's star ?
Losing Hélène youth finds the lovelier truth,
If youth but knew ! But then he were not youth.

THE DRIFT OF THE LUTE.

LOVE, lay aside your lute and leave the roses
That with the bays are twined. No time for sweeping
The strings now in the hush of the heart, nor reaping
Summer's fulfilment. For the daylight closes
With laying on of hands and the heart shriven,
And mystical washing away of sorrow,
So there is neither yesterday nor morrow,
But quiet and the world to healing given.
And if such peace o'er lute and roses drifted
Would seem to beggar love of coronation
Thus in the darkness fallen on an ending,
See! than the sun, whose golden hands were lifted
In heaven, now cloaked, more lovely seek her station,
The moon consummate in her place ascending.

LOVE AND BEAUTY.

EVEN tho' love were done, shall we complain
If in the world there's hidden loveliness
Born of that love, and not a lost caress
But makes us poorer to the common gain ?
This beauty may adorn with deeper stain
The cool first jonquil, or with light redress
The vision of a star, and thus confess
That love though lost, is never lost in vain.
And if for others we have lit this flame,
While us the gloom invests of dying embers,
Being so separate, your heart remembers,
As mine, the world before the wonder came,
For that sweet change we spent our hearts in heaven,
Thus briefly won, thus lost, and thus forgiven.

VICTOR FOX.

(Ave atque Vale.)

YOU⁷ from Givenchy, since no years can harden
The beautiful dead, when holy twilight reaches
The sleeping cedar and the copper beeches,
Return to walk again in Wadham Garden.
We, growing old, grow stranger to the College,
Symbol of youth, where we were young together,
But you, beyond the reach of time and weather,
Of youth in death for ever keep the knowledge.
We hoard our youth, we hoard our youth, and fear it,
But you, who freely gave what we have hoarded,
Are with the final goal of youth rewarded
The road to travel and the traveller's spirit.
And, therefore, when for us the stars go down,
Your star is steady over Oxford Town.

ENGLAND.

DEAR English heart, the open waterways,
The sea that is aware of liberty,
And your great ships, her servitors, the sea
Deep, as your depths, saying of pomp and blaze,
"These things are not for us," since other days
Return, and when the flag is shaken free,
Cold captains, Drake and Nelson, watch with thee,
Whose eyes, of boastings cleared and empty praise,
Beyond the wrecked armadas find the soul,
That unto battle brings our captains' test:
"Triumph is good, but honour still is best.
Conquest of what is evil, and no goal
Of self-advancement. For the world set free
The ships of England keep the English sea."

THE MOON IN FLANDERS.

SOLDIERS that after struggle in the night
See the cold stars assume their shining place,
Watch the sweet moon and her unaltered grace
Mocking with peace the battle-tortured sight,
Think these not careless. These were not less white
Long years ago upon the upturned face
Of other soldiers also of your race
Who on those fields fought such another fight.
These stars, this moon, in their high citadel
Of heaven are witness in the Low Country,
Whose lights are the mere lights of history
Falling on you, these on your fathers fell.
See through the reek and horror, shining through,
Cold lights indeed, but lights of Waterloo!

THE SOLDIER SPEAKS.

THIS then was love of woman. O how little
Remembered, being free! Say she was tender
And had a lure of the hands. Here ruthless splendour
Mutualures that lure. And, look you, love was brittle
That broke, and none could heal it, being sated.
But this is lasting, this is always stranger
Each terrible new dawn, for each new danger
May be the last of all. O, we have waited
On love like cowards, and the worshipped woman
Enslaved and shamed us. But that shame is over.
We are with death acquainted, and to riot
And call of blood and tenderness and human
Regrets he does succeed this final lover,
Whose love is freedom and whose gift is quiet.

FLOWERS AT HAMPTON COURT.

THE chestnut trees in Bushey Park are lit
This year as always, since the spring knows naught
Of war and death, and still the shadows flit
Across the dappled grass and burnish it.
And still at night the moon in stately sort
Is tranquil with the avenues, and lights
The sleeping palace, as on other nights
Of springs long past ; but searching for the rose
In vain, the dawn a little whisper knows :
“Where are the flowers that were at Hampton Court?”

Two years ago when all the trees were green
The old red walls were unto to summer brought,
By joyous band of lilies, and the lean
Daffodils danced before or ran between.
Where are they gone these blooms of good report ?
And where the lad and where the laughing maid
Who came to wonder and to love who stayed ?
For a lost flower is a little thing,
But a lost lover is the end of spring.
“Where are the flowers that were at Hampton Court?”

! spring these flowers are growing elsewhere,
In a new soil a changing radiance taught,
Born of the soul and nourished of the air,
Sweeter though scentless and unseen more fair.
Where are they gone these blooms of good report?
Is it perhaps that where the Tigris flows
There blooms an unaccustomed English rose?
And where the guns have killed the spring in France
The English lilies break a silver lance?
Where are the flowers that were at Hampton Court?"

thus the flowers, where are those who here
Themselves fresh flowers with the springtime fraught,
Saw the first leaves in Bushey Park appear,
The dead swept leaves, the leaves of yesteryear?
Where are they gone, those lads of good report?
It may be they are sleeping; it may be
Strange lands have taken them or a strange sea.
But wheresoever in the world they lie
An English voice, till that world ends will cry :
Here are the flowers that were at Hampton Court?"

SHYLOCK REASONS WITH
MR. CHESTERTON
AND OTHER POEMS

DEDICATION.

ONLY this—that when I've done with wearing
Gold words upon my heart and reaching after
My immortality, I shall be hearing
Then, and long afterwards (be sure?) your laughter.

Only this—that when I come to sleeping
And later men appraise me in the quarrels
Of poets and the bays, tell them I'm keeping
No bays, but at my heart a lover's laurels.

PERSONALITIES.

SHYLOCK REASONS WITH MR. CHESTERTON.

JEW-BAITING still! Two thousand years are run;
And still, it seems, good Master Chesterton,
Nothing's abated of the old offence.
Changing its shape, it never changes tense.
Other things were, this only was and is.
And whether Judas murder with a kiss,
Or Shylock catch a Christian with a gin,
All all's the same. The first enormous sin
Traps Judas in the moneylender's mesh,
And cuts from Jesus' side the pound of flesh.
Nor is this all the punishment. For still
Through centuries to suffer were no ill
If we in human axes and the rod
Discerned the high pro-consulate of God,
Chastening his people. But we are not chastened.
Age after age upon our hearts is fastened
The same cold malice; and for all they bleed
They burn for ever with unchanging greed.
Grosser with suffering we grow, and one

Calls to another: "If in Babylon
Are gold and silver, be content with them!
Better found gold than lost Jerusalem."
They forget Zion; in the market place
Rebuild the Temple for the Jewish race,
And thus from age to age do Jews like me
Have their revenge on Christianity,
Since thus from age to age Christians like you
Unchristian grow in hounding down the Jew.
And thus from age to age His will is done,
And Shylock's sins produce a Chesterton.

But since we both must suffer and both are
Bound in the orb of one outrageous star,
Hater and hated, for a little while
Let us together watch how, mile on mile,
The heavenly moon, all milky white, regains
Her gentle empery, and smooths the stains
Of red our star left in her heaven, thus
Bringing a respite even unto us
Before the red star strikes again. The riot
Of the heart for a moment sinks, and in the quiet
Like a cool bandage on the forehead be
Content a second with tranquility.
And from your lips the secular taunt of dog
Banish, to hear what in the synagogue

We heard once at Barmitzvah (as we call
The confirmation, when the praying shawl
Is for the first time worn, and the boy waits
For law and manhood at the altar gates).
Whether 'tis true or no, it shall be true
Just long enough to build a bridge to you,
That hangs a shining second till your laughter
Reminds me of my ducats and my daughter.

It happened thus. When the last "Adonoi"
Had faltered into silence of some boy
Whose voice was all a silver miracle
Of water, a voice echoed "Israel,"
A sweeter voice than even his, but broken
With a sorrowful thrill, as though the heart had spoken
Of countless generations doomed to pain
And none to ease them found. It cried again,
Or so we thought, who listened, "Ye do well
To let the children come, O Israel,
But even these are lost and unforgiven,
Since not of these His kingdom and his heaven,
Who at their fathers' fathers' hands were sold
In Calvary; and not their voice, though gold,
Nor innocent eyes, nor ways that children have
Of magic in their reaching hands, can save.
For, though ye offer these as sacrifice,

A nation's childhood is too small a price
To pay the interest upon the debt
That all your sorrows cannot liquidate.
O what a usury our God has made
On thirty pieces that the high priest paid!
Profit was none, but from the first the loss
That grew of the fourth ghost upon the Cross.
Two on the Cross were seen at Jesus' side,
The fourth, the fourth unseen and crucified
With piercé hands and feet, and heart as well,
The ghost betrayed of traitor Israel.
Yourselves ye bought and sold, yourselves decreed
To the end of the world your doom. For who will heed
The prayer or utter mercy on a child,
However sweet he call? The heart is wild
Of your own ghost, and not the softest lamb
Of God escapes his sentence. For I am
The wraith of all your children from the first
Long ere their birth inexorably cursed."
None saw the ghost. Some said it was the boy
That spoke. Yet someone answered "Adonoi,
Thy will be done" and it was finished. All
Closer about their foreheads drew the shawl
Fearing to see; and as the darkness grows
Deeper, save where above the altar glows
One lamp, in hearts that Pharoah would unharden

For pity rises not a cry for pardon,
But to the Mills of God a bitter call:
"Grind quickly, since ye grind exceeding small!"

That is the tale. But mark, the moon in heaven
Is hid with clouds. This little time was given
To peace and to remembering one another
Who might have been (God knows) brother with brother.
But since 'tis over and the peace is done
Shylock returns and with him Chesterton.

THE UNKNOWN GOD.

“Whom you ignorantly worship, him I declare unto you.”

I. PHEIDIAS.

PHEIDIAS, the sculptor, dying bade them set
His last-cut marble near lest he forget,
Travelling, where beauty ends, what beauty is
In the world and in the light no longer his.
And while they brought it, women, as they use,
Sang in the house the litany of Zeus
That is the god of gods, yet could not save
His own beloved lady from the grave.
“The dearest head” they sang, “yea even her’s,
Whose hair was like a harp, when the wind stirs
Upon the strings and wakes them, golden hair,
Must droop upon the ground and perish there—
Even her hair (the women sang), alas
For loveliness! wherein Olympus was
Lost for a god and found, when he, with mist
About him of its glory twist on twist,
Found on her mouth, more passionate for this,

ortality, that trembled in the kiss
- Even that hair, for all a high god's art,
- Long since is dust, and dust that was her heart."
His song of ending in the darkness came
To Pheidias in the courtyard, where the flame
Of torches threw a final light, and shewed
Two pillars of the house, a turn of road
That led (he thought) beyond all sight, and he
Must walk it with a quiet company
- The cold imagined gods, no prayer might cozen
To help him on the way, immortal, frozen
Glimpses of deity his hand, creating
On marble out of his heart where they are waiting
For life, had carved, and given them instead
Of life the eternal gesture of the dead.
He with those gods must walk, since he had grown
Into their silence, and had made his own
Their longings thus imprisoned, and their heart
On one beat fixed for ever. He must start
To follow, but before his striving spirit
Steps out upon the road or falters near it,
One god, that guards the passage, waiting stands—
His latest marble, made like those, with hands
Fashioned, like those, of a man's dream, but overstepping
His maker's mind, and into a glory sweeping
No man might share. For the great forehead lifted

Out of the shade of life, and light had shifted
Her quality, whose radiant indecision
Found, though the eyes were closed, consummate vision.
This was the god that dying Pheidias
Had beaten out of marble. This he was,
And would not share with other gods their death
In beauty, but was living with the breath
Of his creator, who with death at strife
Laid down his own to give his creature life.
This god they brought to Pheidias, for whom
The whole great world had been a little room,
Which he had used, as others use, but he
Looked through the window on eternity.
And seeing his god, upon his mind the cloud
Faded an instant, and he cried aloud,
As though all Hellas heard him, "O be proud
Of beauty, Hellas, nor be curious
Of what the secret is that haunted us
Your poets, who had strained to it, and after
Lay down to sleep, sealing their lips with laughter.
For laughter is the judgment of the wise,
Who measure equally with level eyes
What the world is, what gods, and what are men,
And twixt too great a joy, too sharp a pain,
Strikes on a balance, so that tears are shot
With laughter, laughter with tears, and these are not

Themselves, but greater than themselves, and each
From other learns and doth to other teach.
We are content with beauty thus, who find
That when all's done—sculpture or song—behind
What we have carved or sung, a greater thing
Startles the heart with movement of a wing
We neither see nor dare see. For our thought
Is larger than we know, and what we sought
Passes and has forgotten ; what we do
The truth we did not guess at pierces through,
If what was done was well done. This last bust
Of mine not as I willed but as I must
I carved, and now, at the end of all, I can
See that the dream he does not dream is man.
The earlier gods I carved and knew, they wait
My coming as their master at the gate
Of death ; for what I knew is mine to have,
Live with my life, and wither in my grave.
Thus beauty known is fading, known love fades,
And the truth we know a shadow in the shades.
And only that which lies beyond our hands,
Beauty, no earth-bound spirit understands,
But guesses at and faints for in desire ;
And love, that does not burn, because the fire
Is lit beyond the world, and truth that dies
Beyond our thoughts in unimagined lies

That are the truth beyond truth, only these
Are lasting and outwit our memories.
But the familiar gods that I have made—
With those I will not walk. O be afraid
Of beauty attainable and love attained
And limited immortality. Unchained
The greatest soul must walk and walk alone
With what it has not seen and has not known!”
Thus Pheidias spoke and presently the flame
Of torches died. His god that had no name
—His latest statue—watched his spirit pass,
And the dawn came that knew not Pheidias.

II. PAUL.

PAUL the apostle, on the sacred hill
Of Mars at Athens, felt a hidden will
Working against his gospel. That was old
(It seemed), yet had the thrust of boyhood, cold,
Yet tempered in wild fires, and aware of this
He prayed in silence. The Acropolis,
Making a final bid for beauty, took
The dying sun to her heart with the wild look
As of a woman yielding to her lover;
And he in flame confederate leaning over

With armfuls of clouded roses, blossom on blossom
Rifled the sweets of evening, and for her bosom
Dismantling heaven's high pavilion
With tumbled beauties wooed her thus, and won.

This Paul from prayer rising saw, nor cared,
Watching a Cross in the East, if these had snared
The West with meshes trailing from the wrist
Of Venus, also an Evangelist.

"So little is the conquest of the flesh,
So like a spinner, weaving her small mesh
—And a boy tears it as he passes by—
Embroiders fruitlessly her tapestry
The Paphian woman, and the threads are thin
And ghostly as the new light enters in—
The tapestry that was the world and all
The curtain Jesus tears aside" says Paul:
"What is there worshipful here? These skies are fleeting,
This beauty made by hands of the sun is beating
Into the night that swallows her, and none
Is warm, when night has fallen, with the sun.
And the whole frame of the celestial
Firmament though dusted with the stars, must fall
As being under death, and change in Hell,
When death is conquered, her corruptible
Beauty, and at the trumpet's sound put on,

As ye must also, incorruption.”
And while he spoke the curtain of the sky
Night fretted with the cool embroidery
Of stars, and the moon upon her silent spindle
Did all the velvet warp to silver kindle.
But a young man of the philosophers,
Who stood about him, said “The moonlight stirs
With beauty in the heart, and in the mind
The things that seem do such a glory find
Lit with this wonder of the moon and star,
As almost to persuade us that they are,
But these we know are broken images
Of patterns laid-up in heaven. Socrates,
A citizen of Athens, was betrayed
To death for teaching this, and smiling laid
His cup of hemlock down, because his heart
Already of eternity was part,
And death for such is freedom. Yet for this
He did surrender the Acropolis,
That had all Hellas for a coronet
About her forehead radiantly set,
Island on island, and for this forsook
The friendship of his friends, his dreams, the look
Of hesitating spring that dare not stay
Yet will not leave the hills of Attica.
For this all gifts, all memories, he gave,

Freely believing that the narrow grave
Was the end of all. Thus he passed out alone,
Content to face the gods no man had known
Because they beggar knowledge, and persuaded
It was enough, that, when for him had faded
The light, for us his death a light had lit
Would shew a path and we might walk by it.
'This is the spirit of man; in vain it reaches
Beyond the limits ordained and vainly stretches
To where truth, beauty, goodness, three in one,
Find each in all supreme communion.
For what is greater than we know,' he said
'It is well to die,' and smiling he was dead.
This he believed, all this he sacrificed.
Did he teach better, Jew, whom you call Christ?"

A cloud passed by the moon, and no one spoke,
Till suddenly her silver spear-head broke
The cloudy targe, and leaning from the place
She has in heaven struck with light the face
Of Pheidias' god. And Paul cried "Even thus
Ye have your answer, superstitious
Who set this idol up, and worshipped it
In darkness, and behold the face is lit
With fire from on high. A period
Is set to ignorance and to the god

Ye ignorantly worship, and the stone
Or marble of the god ye have not known,
Changes beneath my hand and in my speech
Unto the living god I know and preach.
Do you rejoice because that Socrates
Died facing death and dark? I tell you these
In Christ are conquered. Death has lost her sting,
The dark her victory, and angels sing
At the empty mouth of the grave, because my king
Has made the grave a refuge and protection
From the pain of living by His resurrection.
Socrates sleeps; the god he did not know
Sleeps with him, and long since the grasses grow
Above their resting place, but flowers reach
In vain their roots to find Him whom I preach.
He is not there, but though we darkly see
As in a glass, his immortality
Waits for us all, and beckons in the place
Where we who find Him see Him face to face.
Socrates, to death a prisoner, did well,
But death was all; Christ by the miracle
Of the open grave, his deity forsaken,
For all the world has death a prisoner taken.
Nor Socrates in vain all sacrificed
If here his fruitless death has pled for Christ."
Dionysius the Areopagite

Cried loudly unto Paul "Were it not right
To shatter on his marble pedestal
This idol that has stood for death?" and Paul
Answered "What say ye brethren, for His sake
Who vanquished death shall we the idol break?"
But even as Paul raised his hand the light
Faded upon the sculptured face. The night
Cloaked it, and, though Paul pressed, the threatened blow
Hung in the air and fell not. For a low
Strange glory changed upon the face, and seemed
A face that Paul had seen before or dreamed
To see when near Damascus, and instead
Of Pheidias' god unknown another Head
Sorrowful-sweet on Paul astonished shone,
And, ere his threatening hand could fall, was gone.
But a voice whispered "Art thou after all
Thine unknown God still persecuting, Saul?"

CASSIO HEARS OTHELLO.

THUS for the ultimate time with the first kiss!
O my white bird, here is the precipice!
I throw you like a homing carrier
Into the footless spaces of the air!
And your spread wings, set free, beat up and out
In mounting circles, storming death's redoubt
And the cloudy fortress of Avilion.
Gone, my white bird, beyond all dreaming, gone!
And my hands warm that held her. Cassio
It was well done. Always to let her go
In the grave they shall be open thus, and yet
Feeling the half-poised wings—poor hands! Forget
My madness, Cassio, and think of me
As of a man who set his sea-bird free
From the prison of his heart to see her win
The deep blue floors of heaven, and enter in
O I am glad, I am glad, I dared this thing.
Even now my bird is home, awakening
Among her shining sisters, far—so far,
Not even the thoughts I have can trouble her.
So carve upon the stone that marks my grave:
“All that he had to death Othello gave,
And has kept nothing back but the sweet wound
Of life, that grew so dear, because he found
The mortal knife, that stabbed him, slit the strings
That gave his bird the guerdon of her wings.”

THE FIRST AIRMAN.

GIVE me the wings, magician ! I will know
What blooms on airy precipices grow
That no hand plucks, large unexpected blossoms,
Scentless, with cry of curlews in their bosoms,
And the great winds like grasses where their stems
Spangle the universe with diadems.
I will pluck those flowers and those grasses, I,
Icarus, drowning upwards through the sky
With air that closes underneath my feet
As water above the diver. I will meet
Life with the dawn in heaven, and my fingers
Dipped in the golden floss of hair that lingers
Across the unveiled spaces and makes them colder,
As a woman's hair across her naked shoulder.
Death with the powdered stars will walk and pass
Like a man's breath upon a looking-glass,
For a suspended heart-beat making dim
Heaven brighter afterwards because of him.

Give me the wings, magician. So their tune
Mix with the silver trumpets of the moon,
And, beyond music mounting, clean outrun

The golden diapason of the sun.
There is a secret that the birds are learning
Where the long lanes in heaven have a turning
And no man yet has followed ; therefore these
Laugh hauntingly across our usual seas.
I'll not be mocked by curlews in the sky ;
Give me the wings magician, or I die.

His call for wings or death was heard, and thus
Came both to the first airman, Icarus.

MARY.

(Sister of Martha.)

THERE was no star in the East that night I came
With spikenard in hushed Jerusalem—
But a light in an upper chamber dimly lit
Was star enough. I would have followed it
Through lonelier streets unto the smaller room
Where afterwards it blossomed in the tomb.
Light of the world, but how much more to me
The light that other women also see !
No choiring angels in gold groups adored
Their king that night, but searching for my Lord
Unchoired, uncrowned, whose Kingdom had not come,
I heard none call, but dumb, as death is dumb,
The night misled his angels, or may be
Night and the angels made a way for me.
My footfalls in the street rang very clear
As I drew on. It seemed that all must know
My coming, eyes that peered behind the grating,
Cloaked hands to hold me at each corner waiting.
But nothing stirred till suddenly there ran
The flame of the moon in heaven for a span

Less than a heart-beat, and I saw a man
Steal out of Simon's house, and pass me by
With such a horror on his lips that I,
Also a traitor, shrunk and knew him not—
The apostle Judas called Iscariot.
Also a traitor I, because I came
Not worshipping the Master in that Name
That his disciples called him, not the Christ
Of God for me that night. I sought a tryst
With a man of men, and if my heart had won
The Son of God had died in Mary's son.
And he, who, knowing the appointed evil,
Sent forth Iscariot to his task, a devil,
Also accepted, with dark splendour stirred
The sweet betrayal of the spikenard.
He knew me what I meant, and in his eyes,
That for a moment smiled, was Paradise
Lost unto love, that for the greater sin
Than even Judas' might not enter in.
And when the disciples would have stayed my hands,
"She does but good" He said "she understands."
And I who poured the unguent understood,
But good it was not, as a man means good.
For I forget the Master, I but see
(A woman taken in adultery
With a dream and a dream) his human face

I would have saved from God, and in the place
Of Gospel and of resurrection I
Hear him say "Mary" and behold him die.
Judas, to death who sold him for a kiss,
Sinned less than I, who'd buy him back for this.
And Christ forgave me—How shall I forgive
Jesus, my love, the man who would not live?

THE SICILIAN EXPEDITION.

TO-DAY the Triremes sailed for Sicily
With no wind stirring on a soundless sea ;
But a great crying of birds beat up and filled
The empty caravans on the air and stilled
The thrashing of the oars. The level sun
Unto himself, it seemed, drew one by one
With strings of gold the ships that no one heard
Move on the waters, till at last one bird
(Of all the wings past knowledge and past counting)
Wheeled upwards on the air and mounting, mounting.
Rose out of human sight, but all the rest
Passed with the passing fleet into the West.

To-day the Triremes sailed—and will their sailing
Prosper or fail because a gull was wailing
For crumbs about the prows? Who but a fool
Would find a message in a screaming gull?
For if gods use such messengers as these,
The less gods they (or so says Socrates).
They are not gods (he says) of fear and hate,
A swollen type of man degenerate,

Catching at flattery, at sorrow fleering
And every spiteful whisper overhearing;
But largely on their mountain they attend
Unflinchingly the one appointed end,
When what was nobly done and finely striven
Will find the archetype laid up in heaven.
Not these by gulls pronounce or suffer doom,
Nor cries among the ships (and yet the gloom
Settles about Athene's temple. If
An injured god used his prerogative
Of anger, might not Hermes?)—that's the gull
Stirring the superstition of a fool!
What if a week ago we, waking, found
The Hermae spoiled or fallen to the ground?
Shall Fate be altered or a doom be spoken
Because an image was in malice broken?
Or Athens, that remembers Marathon,
Rock in her empire for a splintered stone?
How dear she is—was never city else
So loved, or lovely in her strength; like bells
Dim in the brain her beauty. This is she,
Athens, whose sweeter name is liberty.

To-day the Triremes sailed—as Zeus decrees
All shall be done; but hardly Socrates,
As Westward in the dark our captains wear,

1
Would frown if an Athenian spoke a prayer
Even to Hermes, (even though it seem
We fear the flight of birds and cries in him),
Thus saying simply for the love of her—
Athens—"O Hermes, called the Messenger,
God of the wings, since now the sails are set,
If aught was evil, evil now forget!
If aught was left undone, think not of this
But her remember, Hermes, what she is,
A city leaning to the sea, and shod
With freedom on her feet, as thou a god
With wings art poised for flight—O, if the gull
Were bird of thine, Hermes, be merciful."

CAESAR AND ANTHONY.

AUGUSTUS CAESAR, ageing by the sea,
Remembered, musingly, dead Anthony,
And wondered as he thought upon his days
Which had been better, laurel leaves or bays.
“Bays for the victor, when his fight is over,
But laurels” thought Augustus “for the lover.
That brown Egyptian woman, the fierce queen
Who with a serpent died—she came between
Him and the world’s dominion, whispering
‘Does empire burn so, has thy crown the sting
These lips have when they touch thee—thus and thus?
Choose then!’ ‘I choose!’ replied Antonius.”
“I wonder” thought Augustus as he lay,
Watching the menial clouds of conquered day
Applaud with vehement reflection
The cold triumphant ending of the sun.
“The sun’s an emperor, and all the sky
Burns to a flame for his nativity,
And not less beautiful nor unattended
By conquered flocks of cloud he passes splendid,
Throwing his slaves this laminated gold.
Master in death, but in his death how cold!
But to have died astonished on a kiss
Had heat to the end and Anthony had this.”

THE DANCERS.

THIS was the way of it, or I forget
How visions end. The flaming sun was set,
Or setting in a sky as green as grass,
Stained here and there like a window, where there was
A martyr-cloud with halo dipped in gold
Or red as the Sacred Heart is. From the old
Low house—a country house not built with hands,
And of that country where the poplar stands
Whose leaves have shivered in our dreams—there came
With the rising moon the dancers to the same
Tune we have heard we scarce remember when,
Nor care so only that it sound again.
Each dancer wears a fancy for a dress,
This one with starlike tears is gemmed no less
Than that is crowned with roses as of lips
That kissed and do not kiss. There also trips
Pierrot, because we all have lost, and thin,
Cruelly swift, victorious Harlequin,
Because some find and keep, but both entwine,
Because she needs them both, with Columbine.
Then lanterns on the trees to radiant fruit
Burn till dawn plucks them, and the light pursuit
Of dancers on the lawn is done, and laughter
Of those who fled and those who followed after
Dies; to a little wind the darkened trees
Bend gravely and resume their silences.

BATTERSEA.

I HAVE always known where London river ends
(Or seems to end) that I shall find my friends,
Who are my friends no longer, being dead,
And hear the ordinary things they said,
That now seem wonderful, some evening when
I take the Number Nineteen bus again
To Battersea. It will, I think, be clear
With stars behind the four great chimneys. Dear
In the moon, young and unchanging, they
Will cry me welcome in the boyish way
They had before they went to France, but I,
A boy no more, will greet them silently.

1

THE WOODCUTTERS OF HÜTTELDORF.

"The plan by which individual Viennese are allowed to obtain their own wood supplies has already been described by more than one observer. It will, however, in time to come appear so incredible, and it so completely sums up the misery of the people and the breakdown of civilization and administration, that no excuse is needed for placing it once more formally and definitely on record.

In the immediate neighbourhood of Vienna lies a forest known as the Wienerwald, the nearest point being on hills to the north, two or three miles from the centre of the city.

The two chief centres of wood collection are the suburbs of Hütteldorf and Dornbach.

The prevalence of women and children among the collectors is the most painful feature of the proceedings."

From "Peace in Austria," by Sir W. Beveridge.

N OUS n'irons plus au bois : the woods are shut :
Les lauriers sont coupés : the laurels cut.
Thus love, when still his pitiful sweet cry
For youth and spring, his play-boys, sensibly
Touched at the heart. But now he does not care
What woods, what trees are standing anywhere.
For there's no wood in the world to be found
That does not stab his feet, and the trees wound

His eyes with thorns—the eyes which did not see
In joy, but find their sight in misery.

There is a wood they named the Wienerwald.
There when the spring was new the throstle called
Spring to her ball-room, and the Viennese
Heard her light foot provoking the grave trees,
Half willingly at first, young leaves to stir,
That later passionately danced with her.
And here the cannon-fodder used to feed
The altar-fire of the older need,
And sweeter than the need of death. In spring
The Austrian boys saw love awakening
Here, and as English boys in English wood
Have given all to love, all that they could
These gave—their childhood, dawn's relentless star
That is put out with kisses. These they gave
And buried childhood lightly in her grave
So that a man might hear her calling yet,
“Primrose farewell, good-morrow violet!”—
Might yet have heard her, but the woods are shut
To those who would return: the laurels cut.

There are many go to-day to Wienerwald,
But love does not go with them. He has failed
In the Great War, who had so little skill

In the Will to Murder, love who was the Will
To live and make live, but the War has shewn
His Will is treachery, and love's alone
In a great wilderness. For if he cries
Aloud, they mock him in their Paradise—
The Angels of Armageddon. "This is he
Who ruled us, being blind, now let him see"
They say, "a prisoner, what we have done,
The priests of mankind's last religion.
Let him look deep and celebrate in Hell
How we reverse the Christian miracle,
Stealing their spirits from the sullen swine
And consecrating them as yours and mine
So that we rush together suddenly
Down a steep place, where by an empty sea
Our worshippers pile on a flaming wharf
The trees that were the woods of Hütteldorf."

Ares, the god of battles, has prevailed.
At Hütteldorf, deep in the Wienerwald,
They go to the woods for fuel, and one sees
A child that beats upon the laurel trees
With starved small hands that hold an axe, and how
The spring returns to find a hooded crow
Waiting and waiting, as the thrush once waited
For childhood's end. But this, it seems, was fated

That all should change, save only that these seem
Still unsubstantial as the lover's dream,
As unsubstantial, but with blossoms set
That have no traffic with the violet
And primrose. Here the purple flowers of Dis
Burn their young foreheads and they fade with this,
Who find a different end and different haven,
Where the hooded crow is waiting with the raven.

In Wienerwald the starving Viennese
Have spoiled the woods and cut the laurel trees,
Nous n'irons plus au bois : oh love, oh love !
Will you not go the more because they prove
So shattered, the poor woods ? and will you shut
Your heart, O love, because the trees are cut ?
Les lauriers sont coupés, but you can heal
Even the broken laurel, and reveal
Where in the valley of death the children falter
That, though all else doth change, love does not alter,
And, though the woods were dead, there is a tree
You know of, love, planted in Calvary.

Go back to the woods ; replant the laurel trees.
Still love than war hath greater victories,
And while the devils beat the warlike drum
Into their kingdom of peace the children come.

HEINE'S LAST SONG.

LIFE'S a blonde of whom I'm tired
Being fair is just a knack
Women learn to be desired
By a Jew—who answers back :

“Blonde, oh blonde, ye lost princesses
With the shadow in your eyes
As of bodiless caresses
Known ere birth in Paradise.

Little ears of alabaster,
Where like ocean in a shell
Gentle murmurs drown the vaster
Voice of rapture or of Hell.

Tender bodies—ah too tender
To be given or be lent
Unto love the money-lender,
Who demands his cent per cent.

Thus you took a man and tricked him,
Life and ladies, to a will
In your favour, but the victim
Cheats you with a codicil.

All I had, you thought, was given—
Life and ladies, you were wrong:
In a poet's secret heaven
There is always one last song

Even he is half afraid of,
Even he but hears in part,
For the stuff that it is made of,
Ladies, is the poet's heart.

Not for you, oh blonde princesses
Is that final tune, but I
Sing it drowning in the tresses
Of a darker Lorelei.

For her hair than yours is stranger;
Wilder lights are lost in hers
Where the heart's immortal danger,
That you cannot know of, stirs.

Life and ladies, it is over:

Blonde asks all, gives nothing back ;
You must find another lover,
For the poet chooses black.

Where death's raven marriage blossom
Falls in clouds about her breast,
On his dark beloved's bosom
Heinrich Heine is at rest."

IMPERSONALITIES.

THE SATYR.

“HOLLOW” he cries and “hollow, hollow.”
Mark how the creeping moon is yellow
On the cold stones, enmeshing feet
That are not soft, with blood not sweet.

Though in the night one cry his Name
The shuddering air shrinks from the aim ;
And failing eddies will not stir
To let him through to Lucifer.

What answers where no echoes fly ?
None where the moon looks balefully.
Unheard, far-off “O hollow, hollow”
The satyr crieth to his fellow.

BALDER'S SONG.

IT may be raining now, that first warm rain
That melts the heart of earth beneath the snows,
Our Northland snows (she feels the swimmer's pain
Who catches breath, half-drowned, when the blood flows
Shuddering back into the frozen vein).
And did ye think I should not come again
At the long last in spring-time with the rain?

Or may be there is singing in the air
At building-time where the tall windy trees,
By sap and young leaves hurt, can hardly bear
The spring's reiterated urgencies
That at the woods with actual fingers tear.
And did ye, when these songs are everywhere,
Of Balder, who first taught them song, despair?

Or it may be where once my altar stood
And where my worshipped name in prayer ascended,
Blue, like a trumpet, in the solitude
Harebells, that ring before the winter's ended,
Have with the wind my litanies renewed.
Did ye forget (alas! that any could)
That I, the god of flowers, found these good?

And may be where the dog-rose remedies
With her wild flush the hedge, and spring begins,
Born of all these there trembles the first kiss
That from Valhalla brings the Paladins
And ladies, who for all the immortal bliss
Of heaven, have no joy as sharp as this.
Did ye not know in your own memories
That where are love and spring there Balder is ?

It may be raining now, that first warm rain
That melts the heart of earth beneath the snows,
Our Northland snows (she feels the swimmer's pain
Who catches breath, half-drowned, when the blood flows
Shuddering back into the frozen vein).
And did ye think I should not come again
At the long last in spring-time with the rain ?

MARY THE MOTHER.

(Cradle Song.)

SO great a lady, so dear is she,
Princess in heaven, but mother to me!
When little Jesus lay in her arm,
It was enough for him that he was warm.

When the small head at her bosom did nod
Did she remember that He was the God?
Or when she sang to Him low in His ear,
Did she say "Master" or did she sob "Dear"?

Was it the star on the manger that shone
Crowned her an empress, or was it her Son?
So great a lady to lie in a stall—
But only a mother (she thought) after all.

So great a lady, so dear is she,
Princess in heaven; but who does not see
How against Godhead, in spite of the Cross,
She holds to her bosom her Jesus that was?

APPLES.

WHEN there is no more sea and no more sailing,
Will God go vintaging the wine-dark seas,
Reaping gold apples of the storm and trailing
To harvest home the lost Hesperides?

Will God, the gates that guard the river breaking,
Annul the blinding gesture of the sword,
And find the Tree, all other dreams forsaking,
Whose apples are the knowledge of the Lord?

Forsaking dreams—forgiveness and salvation,
Sins that were needless needlessly forgiven,
Hell where he knew vicarious damnation,
And ghosts of rapture in a ghost of heaven?

No longer from self-knowledge then exempted
Shall God the apple tasting Eve repeat
Thus altered, saying, "By the devil tempted
Through all these years I could and did not eat."

Thus at the last shall Man and Maker pardon
Eve's ancient wrong, seeing that, though He cursed
Knowledge, alone of those who used the Garden
God was afraid of apples from the first.

THE SKIES.

THOUGH the world tumble tier by tier,
Down, down the broken galleries,
By day the sun would shine as clear
By night the moon would ride her seas.

Though man and all was meant by men
Upon the empty air were spent,
Irrevocably Charles's Wain
Would swing across the firmament.

So large they are and cool the skies ;
God's frozen breath in dreams, or worse :
Beautiful unsupported lies
That simulate a universe.

THREE EPITAPHS.

I. FLECKER.

YOU have made the golden journey. Samarkand
Is all about you, Flecker, and where you lie
How youth and her beauty perish in the sand
They are singing in the caravanserai.

II. EDITH CAVELL.

WHO died for love, we use to nourish hate :
Who was all tenderness, our hearts to harden ;
And who of mercy had the high estate
By us escheated of her right of pardon.

III. THE LITTLE SLEEPER.

THIS little sleeper, who was overtaken
By death, as one child overtakes another,
Dreams by his side all night and will not waken
Till the dawn comes in heaven with his mother.

H. H. ASQUITH.

*"What sword is left?" sighs England. Answer her
(For you must answer) "This—Excalibur."*

I.

THAT is the sword of England. Arthur drew
The blade at that last battle when he failed,
(Shadow among the shadows, who prevailed
Victorious in disaster). Harold knew
Its point in his heart at Hastings, and it flew
Out of the scabbard when King Richard sailed
And did not reach Jerusalem. It wailed
In the false hand that on the scaffold slew
Charles, and proud Balliol saw the light on it
Shining for Ridley through the flame; was seen
When Mary, Queen of Scotland, was a queen
On earth no longer, and when William Pitt
"England! O how I leave thee," failing cried,
The sword, the sword, was with him when he died.

II.

The line at Mons were privy to the blade,
When God and England seemed together lost,

And riding by the far Pacific coast
Admiral Cradock took its accolade.
These are its victories—to be afraid,
To hear thin bugles sounding “The Last Post,”
Until the blood creeps noiseless as a ghost
And cold, and all we cherished is betrayed.
That is the sword’s way. Those who lose shall have;
And only those who in defeat have known
The bitterness of death, and stood alone
In darkness, shall have worship in the grave.
Swordsman, go into battle, and record
How one more English knight has found his sword!

FRANCE.

TO-DAY you'll find by field and ditch
The small invasion of the vetch :
And where they sleep rest-harrow will
Follow upon the daffodil.

These in their soft disordered ranks
Withstand and overcome the Tanks ;
And the small unconsidered grass
Cries to the gunner " On ne passe."

The corn outlasts the bayonet,
Whose blades no blood nor rust can fret,
Or only the immortal rust
Of poppies failing in their thrust.

The line these hold no force can break,
Nor their platoons advancing shake,
Whose wide offensive wave on wave
Doth make a garden of a grave.

These with the singing lark conspire
To veil with loveliness the wire,
While he ascending cleans the stain
In heaven of the aeroplane.

These in the fields and open sky
Reverse the errors of Versailles,
Who with a natural increase
From year to year establish peace.

For all the living these will cloak
The things they spoiled, the hearts they broke ;
And, where these heal the earth, will be
For all the dead indemnity.

ALCHEMY.

WHEN Kew found spring, and we found Kew,
Gold was the London that we knew—
The gold of gold whose metal is
As yellow as the primroses.

London's Lord Mayor, Dick Whittington,
In heaven heard the carillon
"Turn again; London after all
Is paved with gold by Chiswick Mall."

But afterwards the town was sold
To a mad alchemist for gold,
Who used his art to change, instead
Of lead to gold, the gold to lead.

If where the streets to Hampstead twist
You meet a doting alchemist
Seeking lost gold, refuse him pity;
He changed us when he changed the city!

ORPHEUS.

WHAT Orpheus whistled for Eurydice
(While all the shades were silent, achingly
Holding out hands, and hands stretched evermore
In a vain longing for a further shore).

The blue smoke floats
Lazily in the dawn above the white
Flat roof you knew, and somewhere out of sight
A child is singing the old Linus song,
Sweeter because the baby voice goes wrong
—The little goatherd calling to her goats.

There's a small hill
On which the olive trees you used to call
Athenes's little sisters, now grown tall,
Watch all day long the coming of the child,
And you'll remember how the brook, else wild,
About these pastures suddenly grows still.

There's such a peace.
Save where a wandering beast shakes on its bell,
You'd almost think the trees had learned a spell
From their wise sister (or from you) to bless
A baby frightened of the loneliness,
Tending her herd and waiting by the trees.

Ah! certainly
There are two things are stronger than the fates—
A lover's song in Hell, a child that waits.
The shadows lengthen. Ere the night descend
On earth, O sweetheart, Mother, friend
Win out of Hell! Return Eurydice!

THE WIND.

WHAT is there left? The wind makes answer :
“I saw the green leaves grow brown and fall ;
I danced with the shadows, I the dancer
Among bare branches. For I,” he saith,
“Hear the thin music whistle and call,
Music, horn-music, the music of death.”

“There stands at the edge of the wood the player
Dark in the darkness, but I have seen,
Ere my feet were lifted, the branches stir.
Darker than dark, than light more fair,
Before I have come he slips between ;
But I, the dancer,” wind saith, “do not care.”

“The leaves have fallen and who shall discover
What there is left in the blackened tree?
And who will know when the years are over,
Among bare branches if I,” wind saith,
“Dance where the shadows and music be,
Music, horn-music, the music of death?”

GABRIEL.

SUPPOSE I gave you what my heart has given—
A door to dreams, a little road to heaven.
Would you pass through the door, my dreams forgetting,
And turn the corner when my sun is setting?

So I should only have (as I have only)
Your hair remembered, eyes that left me lonely,
A mouth as cold as roses, and the kiss
Of Gabriel, sealing love's defeat with this!

OPALS AND AMBER.

CALL it an age, call it a day,
What's in the world with love away?
The sun a round and golden ghost,
The moon the shadow he has lost;
And spring herself for all her green
The bare and brown a pause between.
Call it an age, call it a day,
When love is gone, what's there to say?

Opal or gold, amber or gray,
What's in the world with love away?
Opal a pool of changeling fires,
Where the gold angel stirs desires
That do not heal Bethesda way
But only turn the amber gray.
Call it an age, call it a day,
When love is gone, what's there to say?

Call it a dream, call it a play,
What's in the world with love away?
With love away can a man clamber
To heaven by a rope of amber?

Or can an opal stretch a wire
To lead a girl to her desire?
Amber and opal—but I remember
Love that was better than opal or amber.
Call it an age, call it a day,
What's in the world with love away?

AFTER BATTLE.

AFTER the fighting
Comes not sudden peace, but weariness ;
A gloom no lighting
Of little lamps of jest or speech unravels,
But for the brain and body endless travels,
Twisting and turning like the lovers hurled
For punishment athwart the underworld,
Twisting and turning, and no respite sighting.

After the living
Comes not relief, but a grey level gloom,
When the heart beats as in a padded room
With wild shapes moving—
Silence imploring and from silence flying,
Praying to life and all athirst for dying,
Tearing lost dreams and for the torn dreams weeping,
Fearing to wake, tumultuously sleeping.

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Death's a poor leech with worn-out simples striving
To heal in vain the malady of living.

MADemoiselle DE MAUPIN.

WHEN the stir and the movement are over,
When you that had the lightness of a wind
Or the poise of some swift bird
Burn no longer in any man's mind,
And your voice in no man's heart is heard,
Who in the world will dare to be a lover?

Would any being hurt in the night be crying
"O God! her little mouth that with a kiss
Drank all a man; and—God! her weaving fingers!"
Would any of another dare say this?
Will there be other women, other singers?
I wish with you and me love might be dying.

DU BIST WIE EINE BLUME.

(Version.)

YOU have the way of a blossom,
Cold petal with April green,
And you melt the heart in the bosom
As your beauty enters in.

I will fold my hands together,
Asking of God for you
Always in April weather
Cold petal and colder dew.

CAMBRIDGE.

ALL that I know of Cambridge—
The colleges and that indulgent air
Of a great gentleman who is content
That lesser men should make experiment
With life, for which he does not vastly care—
Is that you tell me you were happy there.

All that I'll say of Cambridge—
Though in her courts Apollo lose the art
Of immortality to find it where
Rupert was used to walk at Grantchester—
Is that for me Cambridge is but a part
Of greater beauties than inform your heart.

A ROOM IN BOHEMIA.

THE sun is shining in the August weather
In the little room and, I suppose,
Gilding the painted parrot on the wall,
The truckle-bed, the table and the rose
Of the poor carpet that we bought together.
And from the street the muted voices call
As though we saw, as though we heard it all.

VICTORY.

LET it be written down, while still the wound
Festers and there is horror in the world
At what was done and suffered, while unfurled
The wings of death are dark upon the ground.
Let it be written "Death we have not found
The worst, though death is evil, nor the curled
Fangs of disease, nor yet to ruin hurled
The tracery of old cities, when no sound

Is in their broken streets. But there's an ape
Out of the slime into the spirit creeping,
That twists mankind back, back into the shape
That mumbles carrion. Here's the cause for weeping
Prognathous chin, slant forehead, eyes that rust
As their flame dies, and smoulders into lust."

CLEOPATRA.

WHY should I care for love? The urgent rose—
What does she promise the heart and what fulfil?
“Delight, delight,” she whispers, and she goes . . .
But love the rose outbidding is falser still.

Why should I care for love? But hush, oh hush!
What bird is singing in the dawn “Forget
The spring,” and you,—have you forgotten, thrush? . . .
But love the thrush outsinging is falser yet.

Why should I care for love? Love does not care
Whether you care or do not care, says she!
But ask your lips how the rose smells in my hair,
If the thrush beats at my heart—here—Anthony!

MEDUSA.

IN your black hair are there not nightingales?
Singing in the dark, and when you let it down
Is there no stir in the air of tiniest sails
That ever on lost seas of song were blown?

In your black hair the heart of Hyacinth
Laments the daylight he shall see no more,
And flowers are red as in the labyrinth
The red eyes of the crazy Minotaur.

In your black hair, Medusa, there are snakes
That twine themselves about Laocoon,
How soft, how warm! and how the poor heart breaks
Before they strike, and turn it into stone.

THE JUNGLE.

TRUTH is the fourth dimension. By her grace
Motion, the idiot of time and space,
Grows reasonable, so that the spirit sees
Behind the aimless drag of categories
The moving centuries, whose gestures mirror
And dissipate the cloudy shapes of error.
O there's the long way back, the dawns that scatter
Like startled birds about the spirit, and chatter
Of animal voices seeking lucid speech
In colonies of darkness. Truth can stretch,
Though motionless, and set a hatchet blazing
A path through the jungle where an ape is gazing
At the edge of a little light, with dripping muzzle,
Black writhing palms, and eyes a drowsy puzzle
Of fears and beastlike hopes. Then the light reaches
His pelt and holds him fast. In vain he snatches
At the sheltering trees, in vain the leafy dance
Down the long avenues of ignorance.
Knowledge and the pain of knowledge fly beside him,
And, where the leaves are darkest, clutch and ride him
Until he sloughs the shape of beast and can
Stand in the dawn upon his feet a man.
But the jungle is not cleared, and still the shapes
Of time and space and error move like apes.

THE PENCIL.

WITH this golden pencil—write
“Written words must serve for sight.
For the broken lights that stirred
Wedded eyes the complete word.

Written words the trembling nerve
Of the lover's ear must serve.
Laughter's done and tears are over—
Written words, instead, my lover.

Words that have no scent must tell
How the secret jonquils smell
In your hair, and words protest
There are jonquils at your breast.

Written words the gift must waste,
When the very air hath taste
Of your lip, the sweets that part
Love's soft mouth and reach the heart.

Separable these await
For the fifth to consummate,
That are nothing, each alone,
But all heaven joined in one.

This, being lost, had hurt too much,
Here are words instead of touch."

Therefore write and break the lead
"Love that was alive is dead."

COLUMBINE.

IF any ask, O tell them that the moon
Was lit in heaven when Queen Ashtaroth
Beat at her lamp and fell upon the swoon
Of love that soars in fire to fall a moth.

If any ask, O tell them that for this
Priam's great city of Troy was sacrificed,
For love that is as bitter as the kiss
Of Judas the Iscariot, betraying Christ.

If any ask, O tell them it is well,
Though love comes like the swallow and flies as soon.
Who has not found his heaven in the Hell
Of love unsatisfied beneath the moon?

THE CROWDER'S TUNE.

THE crowder's tune
Down a street in Babylon—
His fiddle to the moon
With notes like stars that one by one
Glittered upon the empty street,
Glittered and laughed and went
(But there was a lisp of ghostly feet)
To build a firmament.

“Who walks by night in Babylon?
‘I,’ said a lady, ‘because
Of the wonderful thing I was,
And the beautiful things all done,
I walk in Babylon.’

Who seeks for a lady by night?
‘I,’ said a king, ‘My throne
Is empty in Babylon.
She fled from the light to the light;
I seek for a lady by night.’

Who calls by night in Babylon?
'They,' answered love, 'Yes over and over
She calls to her God, but he to his lover;
And each of them walks by night alone,
And they will not meet in Babylon.'"

The crowder played
His little tune, almost
As though he were afraid
Of some forgotten ghost
Awakening,
And crying on the string
Of what was lost
And would not come
Again.
He feared in vain.
For the ghost, the ghost is dumb
Of love that is past over,
And the merciless laughter of the moon
Pursues the ghostly lover,
Till in the empty street
There's an end of the lisp of feet,
And the crowder breaks his fiddle and the tune,
And all the stars are gone
In Babylon.

ENVOI.

PAST Buckhurst Hill the motor-bus
Takes and shakes the three of us.
When first we went, there were but two
In Epping Forest, I and you.

That summer as I understand
A forester from fairyland
Set a notice up, "No road,"
By the ways our feet had trod.

No one came and no one knew,
When the spring returned and blue
Flowers burned, how deep behind
Burned the blossoms of the mind.

No one guessed and no one heard
How, beyond the singing bird,
Some one sang in solitude
In the wood within the wood.

No one watched the years go by
(Not even you, not even I),
In the wood alone apart
Green and waiting in the heart.

Till last week the forester
Heard a little footstep stir,
Took his notice down and smiled
At the coming of a child.

Conquering the solitude
A child is laughing in the wood.
Past Buckhurst Hill the motor-bus
Takes us back the three of us.

